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**MAYOR EMANUEL MAKES PREPARATIONS
TO WELCOME UNACCOMPANIED CHILD MIGRANTS**

City to Identify Sites to Create Space, Provide Services for Hundreds of Unaccompanied Child Migrants

In consultation with the federal government, the Emanuel administration is working with local organizations to create space for hundreds of additional unaccompanied child migrants traveling from Central America to the U.S.-Mexico border in the coming year.

Facing a growing humanitarian crisis, City officials and local organizations are working to identify one or more sites that could hold up to 1,000 beds and evaluate the types of services needed to ensure that the children receive the best possible care while in Chicago.

To ensure that the rights of child migrants are protected, the City is also laying the foundation for a broad-based pro bono campaign that draws upon Chicago law firms.

"The influx of unaccompanied child migrants is a growing humanitarian crisis that we can no longer ignore," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "While we have our own challenges at home, we cannot turn our backs on children who are fleeing dangerous conditions. We will do our part to ensure that these children are given access to services and treated fairly and humanely."

"Sometimes the greatness of our nation and our city are tested and how we treat children in danger is one of those tests," said Congressman Luis V. Gutiérrez (D-IL). "I am proud to see Chicago lead by example on welcoming migrant children and working with them as their cases are resolved. The Mayor has a lot of experienced community organizations and leaders to work with who can provide these children with the support and protection they need."

Earlier this month, the federal government approached the Mayor's administration about the possibility of a federally-funded facility containing one thousand beds. The federal General Services Administration (GSA) would oversee and fund the facilities while the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) would fund support services for the children, including education, health care, food, security, and legal assistance.

In response, the Emanuel administration is consulting with organizations that already provide housing and care for child migrants. A host of organizations, including the Heartland Alliance and the National Immigrant Justice Center, currently provide housing and legal services to hundreds of children housed at multiple sites in the Chicago area.

At the same time, the Mayor is working closely with Alderman Ed Burke (14th Ward) to engage additional organizations and institutions, like the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, willing to offer services to child migrants.

"The people of Chicago have a long history of welcoming not only immigrants but the disadvantaged," said Alderman Ed Burke, (14th Ward), Chairman of the City Council Committee on Finance, "There are thousands of Chicagoans from all walks of life in neighborhoods across the City who are willing to do their part to help."

"Cardinal George has called on the Federal Government to allow the Archdiocese of Chicago, including Catholic Charities and Maryville, to assist in this humanitarian crisis. We, along with the Archdiocese and Maryville, are ready to work with the City in providing counseling, food and clothing, case management, legal assistance and housing to these children with the dignity, care and compassion that every person deserves," said Monsignor Michael Boland, President and CEO of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

"For the past 19 years, Heartland Alliance has been partnering with the U.S. government to provide shelter, education, health care, and access to legal services to unaccompanied migrant children from around the world. As a mission driven organization, Heartland Alliance is committed to human rights and ending poverty and is pleased to support efforts to address refugee children," Heartland Alliance.

To expand legal assistance resources available to serve the expected influx of child migrants, the City is laying the foundation for a broad-based pro bono effort that draws upon Chicago firms.

The Emanuel administration has engaged local organizations, like the National Immigration Justice Center (NIJC), to plan for the anticipated increase in children. To expand the capacity of organizations like the NIJC to spearhead a citywide pro bono effort, the City is supporting an application by Equal Justice Works, a nonprofit focused on providing public interest legal assistance, for a Department of Justice grant that would bring several additional attorneys to work with the NIJC in Chicago.

"Chicago has always welcomed immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) appreciates Mayor Emanuel continuing this tradition as it looks for ways to help Central American children seeking refugee protection. An important part of this response is to ensure access to legal counsel. NIJC and its pro bono attorneys from Chicago's leading law firms will work with the City to provide critical legal services to children who are fleeing violence and seeking safety here," said Mary Meg McCarthy, executive director of the National Immigrant Justice Center.

"The State of Illinois and the city of Chicago has had a long history of welcoming immigrants and refugees, and played a leadership role nationally in immigrant integration. I am proud of the great network of advocates, volunteers, leaders, service providers and community organizations ready and willing to help these children who are simply trying to save their lives," said Lawrence Benito, CEO of the Illinois Coalition of Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR). "As an organization that is dedicated to promoting the rights of immigrants and refugees, we look forward to partnering with the city of Chicago and the State of Illinois to welcome these children and ensure they're treated with dignity and respect."

“I applaud Mayor Emanuel’s efforts to work with the federal government and local partners to welcome vulnerable, unaccompanied child migrants and provide them with the support and services they need. These children are not running to America; they are running from homes where their lives are in danger and they have nowhere to turn. We as a country have an opportunity to do what is just, fair, and compassionate by treating these children with the humanity and care every child deserves.” said Reverend Jesse Jackson Sr. “While others have turned away, the values of our great city compel us to act and I am proud to see Chicago leading by example.”

Once sites are selected, the federal government will rehabilitate the site with a goal of welcoming the first group of child migrants by the end of the calendar year. The City will continue to work with stakeholders to prepare for the arrival of the children.

There is a broader national effort underway to manage a surge in the number of unaccompanied migrant children crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. Between October 1, 2013 and June 15, 2014, over 52,000 children were apprehended at the southwest border, and in 2014, an estimated 70,500 children are expected to get apprehended at the border.

Previously, an average of 7,000 -8,000 child migrants made this trip each year. The majority of these children come from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador and, according to a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees survey of 404 unaccompanied children, 58% “were forcibly displaced because they suffered or faced harms that indicated a potential or actual need for international protection.”

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